The Story of MUSA

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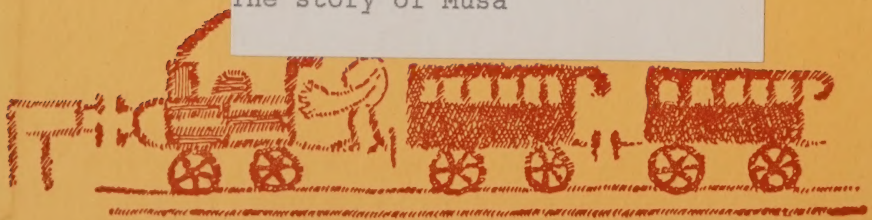

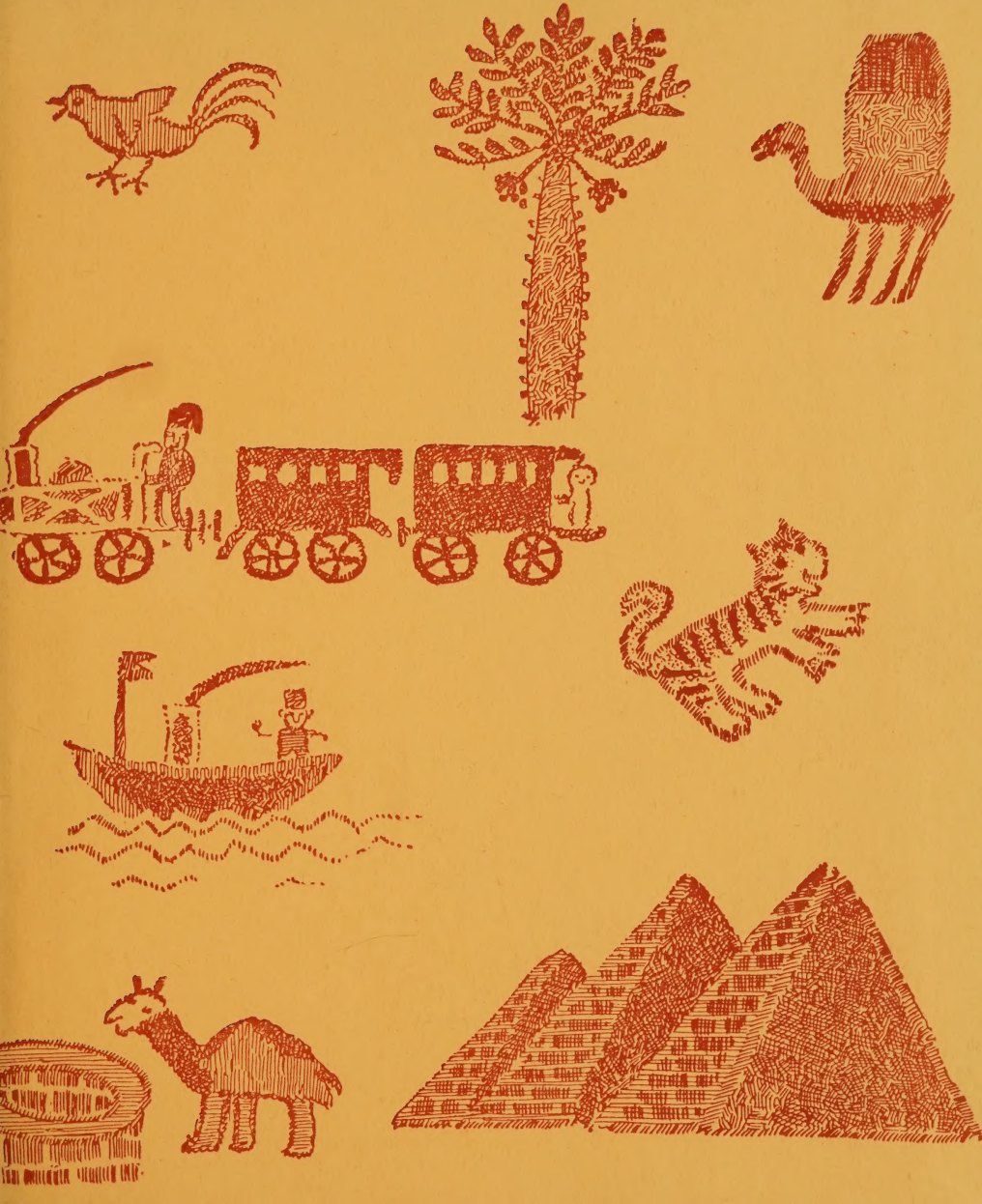

The Story of Musa

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THE STORY OF MUSA

by

MARY ENTWISTLE

Illustrated by Elsie Anna Wood

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TO MY FRIENDS

of the

C. M. S. at BOULAC, CAIRO

this book is affectionately inscribed

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The Story of Musa

I

FIREWORKS FOR THE PILGRIM

ANYONE could tell that something very nice was soon to happen in the house at the end of the narrow street! Since early morning most interesting noises had floated over the high brick wall that surrounded the small garden, much laughter, shrill chatter, and clattering of pots and pans. There had been also a lot of coming and going of friendly neighbors. Now the scent of crisp, freshly baked bread, sesame oil, and sweet cakes sailed gently across to the street. Hungry dogs sniffed the air and gathered hopefully around the closed doors of the garden wall. Musa, returning from the bazaars, smiled as his nose caught the odor of cooking. The dogs scattered as he

flung back the door and ran in, his blue-striped coat flying and his red shoes clattering on the courtyard stones.

At the sound of the slamming of the garden door an excited voice called, "Is that you, Musa?" and little Fatmeh came running to meet her brother. "Can he come?" she asked. "Will he paint the pictures on our walls?" And when Musa, out of breath, nodded a "yes," she ran back into the house crying the good news, "Mohammed Ali is coming, Mother!"

"He is just looking for his brushes, Mother; then he will come at once," added Musa.

"Praise be! It is a good custom, and we'll keep it in the pilgrim's house," said Mother. She came out from the kitchen, a smile on her hot face, and a plate of crisp, sugary, fresh-from-the-oven cakes in her hand.

"Mother," exclaimed Fatmeh, "may we really

taste them? I thought nothing would be touched until Father came."

"But, light of my eyes, suppose they were not quite good enough for the feast! How could I know unless someone tasted?" Mother had a twinkle in her eye as she spoke.

Musa chuckled. "We will try them," he said, eyeing the cakes. "We will let you know, won't we, Fatmeh?"

The brother and sister sat down side by side on the step that led to the house. "Take that one, Brother," said Fatmeh, and pointed to the cake with the nicest sugary crust. Then with great enjoyment they shared the feast to the last crumb, scattering a few precious bits to Fatmeh's pretty white pigeons that fluttered around them.

"What will Mohammed Ali paint on the wall?" Fatmeh asked, when even Musa's brown fingers could get not a scrap more from the plate.

Musa pushed his round turbaned cap farther back on his close-cropped black head and considered.

"Let's tell Mohammed Ali what we want," he said. "Anyway, it's our father coming back from Mecca, not his."

Fatmeh laughed. "Ali has painted ever so many walls of pilgrims' houses, hasn't he? I expect he knows what to paint."

Musa got up. "My father is going to have the best welcome he can have! See? No other boy in this street has a father who is a pilgrim, who has traveled to Mecca. So we are going to have lovely pictures of the travels on our wall." And Musa swaggered down the path.

"Mahmoud's uncle had a procession when he came back from Mecca," said Fatmeh. She opened her eyes wide, and nodded at Musa. "He had a band, too!" she added.

Musa stood still. "So he did, and a feast just like

the one we'll have. Oh, Fatmeh," a sudden recollection came to him, "Mahmoud's father let off lots of fireworks!"

"Musa! Fatmeh! Where are you?" called their mother, coming into the courtyard in search of them.

Musa clutched at her skirts. "Mother, are we going to have a band and fireworks?" he asked.

His mother shook her head. "I cannot promise, light of my eyes," she replied. "The boat may not get in until tomorrow, and then Father might miss the train that would bring him to us before nightfall. We are going to feast him whenever he comes, but how can we hire a band until we know?"

"Nor have a procession?" Musa's face lengthened.

"*Inshallah!*"[1] said his mother. "But see! Mohammed Ali has come, paint and brushes and all." The children hurried out to ask the wall artist what he would paint on their wall.

[1] An expression meaning "If God wills!"

"We want plenty of adventures," demanded Musa.

"Tigers and railway trains," added Fatmeh firmly.

Mohammed Ali smiled. "But if the pilgrim—on whom be peace—saw no tigers on his way to Mecca, little *Sitt,*[2] what then?"

"Oh, but of course he would!" returned Fatmeh, for Fatmeh was sure that all sorts of wonderful adventures would come to a pilgrim to Mecca. So

[2] "Lady."

Mohammed promised to paint a tiger, and most certainly a train.

I wish you could have seen that wall when it was done! Even Fatmeh was satisfied. There were the pyramids at one end, showing the land where the pilgrim began his journey, and at the other end was a painted square to show the sacred place at Mecca to which Musa's father had taken his pilgrimage. In between came two trains and a frisky tiger, birds with wonderful

plumage, date palms, a well, and a steamboat. Fatmeh clapped her hands with delight, and Mohammed Ali asked for five *piastres*[3] more because they were so pleased.

Evening had fallen by the time the painter had gone, and two tired children went in to find Mother with a letter in her hand and joy in her face.

"He is coming tomorrow," she said. "There's time now to get a procession for him."

"The nice pictures are done just in time!" Fatmeh exclaimed.

"We shall have the band, too," said Mother, "and Musa shall go with it to meet our pilgrim."

"Could anything be nicer!" said Fatmeh, and she went to sleep to dream of the happy tomorrow. But Musa lay awake a long time, wondering what gift of his own he could bring to his father's welcome home.

The morning came, and everyone was astir early.

[3] A *piastre* is worth about five cents.

Fatmeh was busy looking after friends who were already arriving. Musa wandered out to the bazaar streets, still busy thinking of his father and wondering what gift he could bring him. As he walked along the crowded street, something fell with a thud at his feet. He looked up and saw a long train of eight camels, each with a closely packed burden, padding slowly along after their driver. The pack covering of one had burst, and bunches of onions and small cucumbers were trickling out and tumbling upon the roadway. No one had told the driver about the mishap. Several of the shopkeepers were laughing at a pastry seller who had slipped a bunch of onions and two cucumbers into his shirt. The rest of the fallen vegetables were being fast trampled in the mud.

Musa called shrilly, but the driver did not hear.

"*Malaish!*"[4] said a shopkeeper to the boy. "It is not thy loss, so why disturb thy heart?"

[4] "Never mind!"

But Musa called again, *"Hasib ya am!"* (Open thine eyes, O Uncle.) This time the driver stopped his camels and looked around. He ran back to find out what was the matter, and flung up his arms when he saw his good onions and cucumbers scattered all over the road. *"Akh-akh!"* he cried to the camel, who kneeled at the command.

Musa ran to help the man. He put his brown knee upon the camel's load and strained at the pack rope,

while the driver repacked the vegetables and replaced the covering. Together they knotted the rope tight, while the camel snarled its disgust. The driver flashed a smile of thanks at Musa, bade the camel rise, and the train moved on. Suddenly the driver turned and came back to Musa. "Take this," he said, "and peace be with you!"

Musa looked, and there in his hand lay a two-piastre piece. Two piastres for his very own! Now

he could buy a gift to welcome his father! He clasped the money tightly in his hand and ran towards home.

As he sped through the garden, Fatmeh came out of the house. "What is it?" she cried, seeing her brother's excited face.

For answer Musa showed her the two-piastre piece and told her quickly how he had gained it. "Fireworks!" he exclaimed. "We shall have fireworks for Father, now!"

Fatmeh gave a sudden chuckle. She undid a knot in the corner of her head veil and took out a shining one-piastre piece. "Fireworks!" she said, mimicking Musa's voice. "It's for fireworks! Uncle gave it to me when I brushed his coat this morning. He came in all splashed with mud."

Musa danced a little jig. "I'll go and buy them now!" he said. "Mind, it's a secret!"

The sunset was glowing pink and red over the roofs of the houses and on the tall, upstanding minarets of

the mosques when Musa went out with the band to meet his father. Some of the relatives had already gone to the station. His mother and sister were waiting at home, for that was the custom. Presently, through the crowd, came the head of the procession. The band began to play, and, in the midst of a very great noise of shouting, Musa ran forward. He saw a big white horse led by two men. Seated on it was a man in a flowing silk *guftan,*[5] a white turban on his head. The turban was bound with green, a sign that the man who wore it had been to Mecca, the holy city of all Mohammedans. Then it must be, yes, it was Ebn Hassan, Musa's father! The boy ran with outstretched arms, and in a moment the horseman had bent down, picked him up, and hugged him. When his father released him, Musa ran back and joined the procession, waving a green scarf and shouting with joy.

[5] A coat-like garment.

As they entered the courtyard, whizz! bang! bang! went the fireworks. There amid a rain of falling

colored stars stood little Fatmeh and her mother, welcoming home the pilgrim. Musa, glowing with love and pride, ran in, exclaiming, "They're all for you, Father, bought with our own money!"

II

BLUE BEADS

IT was the merriest game of *tiah-yah-tiah* being played in Fatmeh's courtyard! Fatmeh, who was "It," was hopping around on one foot trying to catch her companions, and the rest of the girls were shrieking with laughter. Suddenly the game stopped! It was Fatmeh who was crying! "I've lost my beads!" she wailed. "My blue beads are gone!"

At once the girls broke their circle and scattered over the courtyard looking for the beads. They turned up stones green with moss, peered into the birds' fountain, looked into the dove-cote, poured out the water from the stone jar, shook Fatmeh's veil, and turned her long sleeves inside out and outside in. They even disturbed the peace of the three small

brothers who had been dumped in a quiet corner out of the way of the players. But they could not find the beads.

"Oh, what bad luck!" said Fatmeh's special friend, Aziza, shaking her fist at a big crow that was frightening the doves. "I wouldn't have such a thing happen to me, not for all the gold of Ali Baba!"

Fatmeh wailed again. "Oh, oh! What shall I do? My beads are gone!"

The girls shook their heads and offered their sympathy. "Your mother will buy you some more, Fatmeh, don't worry."

They all felt unhappy and no longer wanted to play, and soon they began to think of going home. Aziza picked up her little brother, Saad, and looked

closely to see whether his own blue bead was threaded safely on to his little front curl of black hair. She gave it a little tug to make sure, kissed him hastily when he cried out, then picked him up and set him on her shoulders. "I must take Saad home," she said.

The others, too, soon left the courtyard. A moment later the garden door swung open and Musa ran in. "What's the matter?" he said, as he caught sight of Fatmeh, weeping on the steps.

When he had heard the story, he too shook his head. "That's bad," he said. "But there's the carriage. I

am glad Mother and Father have come." And he ran down to meet his parents who had been visiting friends.

When Mother heard that Fatmeh's beads were lost, she said softly, "Light of my eyes!" and wiped away her little girl's tears. "I have some big blue beads indoors. We will tie them on to you and soon you shall have another necklace. Cry not so!" And Fatmeh was comforted.

When the sun had set and Mother was busy getting ready the evening meal, Father took up his stick and invited Musa to go shopping with him. Fatmeh, with the few new beads already strung round her neck, waved two little flour-covered hands at her father and brother as they left the courtyard. She was quite happy helping to make the bread for supper and had forgotten her tears.

"What are we going to buy?" asked Musa, as they entered the narrow, covered-in streets of the *mousky,*

which was the place where you could do lovely shopping. Then, sighting a camel near by, he exclaimed, "Oh, see that camel! Hasn't he some fine beads?" Another minute and a number of little donkeys trotted quickly past. Musa noticed that they too wore great collars of blue beads. "The donkeys and the camels too are afraid of the evil eye," he said. "I wonder if they are miserable, like Fatmeh, if they lose their beads."

"It's their masters who are afraid, Musa," said his father. "They don't want sickness to come to their creatures, you see, and spoil them, so they protect them from evil by putting on blue beads. But here is the shoe bazaar."

"Oh!" exclaimed Musa, "isn't Gergis like a spider in a web! A web spun with shoes!" There were red and yellow shoes with thick soles for the country folk, thin blue, red, green, and yellow slippers for the town folk! And sitting in the middle, crosslegged

upon the floor, sat the shoe-seller, waiting for any little fly of a customer, looking indeed very like a spider in his web.

"Will his Excellency look at my shoes?" asked Gergis, and soon he and Ebn Hassan were busy bargaining for a pair of strong, soft, red leather shoes.

When the money had been paid and the shoes were being wrapped up, Ebn Hassan said, "By the beard of the Prophet, Gergis, you look prosperous."

"Of a truth I am but a poor man," Gergis replied, tucking the money away safely in a leather bag. "But for the good fortune that no evil eye has looked on me, I should be such a one as that fellow," and he pointed to a ragged, down-at-heel cake-seller who passed by.

"Ah!" said Ebn Hassan, taking up his stick and giving the shoes to Musa to carry, "you sit in the shade of the luck-bringer." He touched with his

stick, as he spoke, a loop of blue beads that hung high up in the web of shoes.

Musa hurried over the uneven stones after his father. "Can't we buy Fatmeh a new string of beads?" he begged.

His father smiled. "See, here is the shop," he said. "You shall choose just what you will for her."

Musa hesitated before the array that the shopkeeper spread before him. Such lovely strings of beads of all colors, and plenty of blue ones—big, little, middle-sized, round, pointed, oval, of every shape and size!

"This is much favored by ladies, on whom be peace!" said the shopkeeper with a smile. He lifted up a necklace of blue, white, and yellow glass beads, shaped like tiny hands. "Lady Fatmeh's hand," Musa said. "See, Father, that is lucky to wear! Let us buy those. They bring safety and happiness, you know."

Presently, with the little necklace safely clasped in Musa's hand, they turned homewards. The lamps were lighted in the crowded street, but the corners between the shops were very dark. Suddenly a carriage came in sight. Everybody in the narrow street tried to get out of the way. Musa ran into a corner for safety. But in doing so, he fell over a boy seated there, who cried out sharply as if he were hurt. Stumbling to his feet, Musa found that he had blundered into a blind boy.

"Ya! Clumsy!" cried the boy, scowling all over his scarred blind face, as he nursed the knee Musa had fallen over.

Ebn Hassan came near. "Be not angry, little brother," he said, and dropped a coin into the blind boy's hand.

"Peace be with you," the boy returned, and Musa and his father passed on.

Musa's fingers clung to his own little blue chain

hidden underneath his clothes. "I'm glad I'm not blind," he thought. Aloud he said, "Father, how does blindness come?"

"God wills it," replied his father, looking gravely down at the boy.

Musa was very much puzzled. The call to prayer he had so often heard from the mosque minaret declared, "God is great, God is merciful." Yet if God willed blindness to people, how was he merciful?

Musa shook his head; he could not understand it at all. He felt his charm once again, then squeezed Fatmeh's little packet to make sure that he had the lucky beads. He was glad he had bought them. Fatmeh would surely be quite safe now, and it really would not matter that the other ones were lost.

Fatmeh was waiting by the steps as her father and brother came into the courtyard. "See what we've found!" she called. "Just see what we have for you!" cried Musa at the same moment. They laughed to-

gether, and Father laughed too. Before Fatmeh could speak, Musa put the little soft paper-covered parcel in her hand. She took a quick peep. "Oo-oo!" she cried, and flung her arms around her father's neck. "It is lovely!" she exclaimed.

When the necklace lay glistening and pretty on her round neck, Fatmeh said, "Come and see my surprise."

She led the way to the big eucalyptus tree that

shaded the courtyard, and ran up the ladder that was propped against its trunk. "See!" she said.

Musa stood on the step beneath her and looked over her shoulder. There, in a half-made crow's nest of straws and sticks that was lodged in the branches, were the lost beads, shining, blue, and unbroken.

"The crows found them and took them to make their home pretty," whispered Fatmeh. "Mother says, 'Let them have the beads, so that their babies will be happy and safe.' "

That night, just before bedtime, Musa was watching the crows settling on to the branch of the tree where they would sleep the night through.

"Father," he said, "do blue beads really keep away blindness and bad luck and those things?"

"Who can say?" answered his father. "It is our custom. Beads cannot harm, even if they cannot help."

"But," Musa objected, "you said that Allah [1] wills blind people to be blind. How, then, can blue beads protect from blindness if Allah wills?"

His father shrugged his shoulders. "These things are too great for thee to understand. It is our custom to wear blue beads, and as for knowing why Allah sends blindness, we cannot tell."

"But does he send blindness?" Musa asked himself as he curled up to sleep that night. "Isn't he merciful? I want to know!"

[1] God.

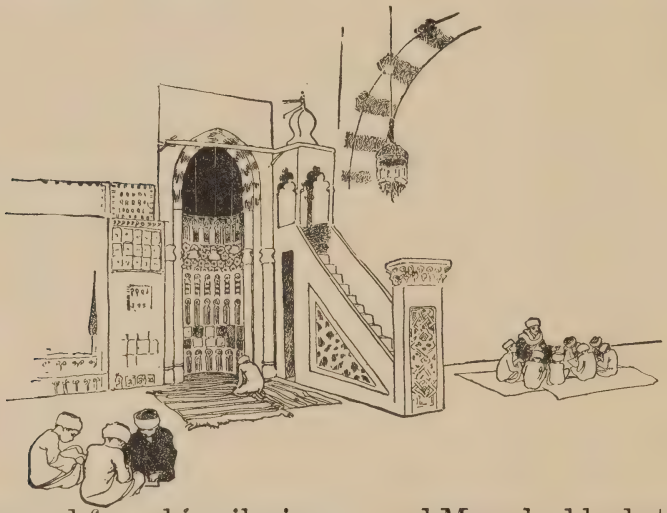
III

AT SCHOOL IN THE MOSQUE

THE old mosque was big, dim, and cool. Even on the hottest day, Musa felt as though the sun had been sent away somewhere when he passed through the stone-paved courtyard into the Mohammedan church, called a mosque. The mosque had high arches and a domed roof. Its walls were lined with blue tiles of many different patterns. When Musa was not attending to the teacher, his brown fingers loved to run over the tiles, tracing out the different patterns. For the mosque was also a schoolhouse, where Musa and half a hundred other boys were taught.

Musa had gone rather slowly to school this morning. He was sorry his holiday was over. He had not

been to school for two whole weeks. First there had been a festival, and the school had closed for that. Then when school was opened, Musa's father had just



returned from his pilgrimage, and Musa had had still more holiday. Now, however, Ebn Hassan had said, "Back to school, my son. Is it an ignorant child who would call me Father? Never let that be said!" So

Musa picked up his copy of the Koran,[1] his tin slate and reed pen, wrapped them up, and putting them under his arm, went slowly to school.

The mosque was cool, but certainly not quiet. All the children sat on the floor, the teachers sat on cane stools or chairs. Some of the classes were reciting in the Arabic language from the first chapter of the Koran. Others were reading from it, and others were learning their alphabet. But whatever they were learning, they studied aloud, swaying their bodies to and fro as they sounded the words or letters. The teachers were listening, however, and when a word was mispronounced or a letter forgotten, the teacher stopped the class and all began over again.

Musa, with the others in his class, was reading. He was reading from the first chapter—which was what we should call the end of the book. He began each page at the top right-hand corner and read each line

[1] The Mohammedan Bible.

from right to left. He read quite correctly, without making any mistake, but he didn't know at all what it meant. Some of the words he had never even heard, and it was no wonder that he did not understand. But he intended to work hard so that some day he would be able to recite the whole of the Koran. After that, even his father would say, "There is no need for you to go to school any more."

Musa yawned. The droning of the voices made him sleepy. He was glad when they were all bidden to get out their slates. It was time for a writing lesson. Each child dipped his reed pen into a small pot of ink and wrote some Arabic words in wonderful Arabic characters. Musa liked this lesson always. He loved doing things with his fingers. The writing grew upon his tin slate, each curve and stroke and dot carefully placed. He was so intent upon his work that he did not notice some visitors who had come to see the mosque. Presently he looked up. Quite close

to him stood two or three of the visitors, looking at the beautiful blue-tiled wall.

Musa stared at them. Two of the visitors were men and two were women. They were speaking to one another in their own language, and Musa could not understand a word. *"Americani* or *Inglilisi,"* said Musa to himself. *"Feringhi,*[2] anyway. How strange is this foreign talk! Why don't they learn to speak good Arabic!"

He looked rather scornfully at the foreigners. Soon one of the ladies turned and looked at the little class. Some of the children showed her their slates. "See, *Sitt!"* they cried in Arabic. *"Bakshish!"*[3] and they held out begging hands with a naughty, laughing look in their dark eyes.

Musa watched the lady as she laughed back at the children and shook her head. Suddenly she looked at him, and then in good Arabic she asked the teacher

[2] Foreigners.
[3] A present, or tip.

if she might look at Musa's writing! Her gray eyes smiled into his brown ones as she took his slate.

"Very good," she said.

Then Musa's brown eyes smiled into her gray ones as the teacher said, "Musa, by the favor of God, will yet be a learned man."

The sky was glowing pink with sunset colors when Musa reached home from school. He found Fatmeh feeding her doves. He flung himself down with such an air of importance that his sister knew he had something to tell. She clapped her hands and the startled doves flew away. Then Fatmeh sat on the ground beside her brother. "Tell me the news," she coaxed.

"Well!" said Musa, drawing a long breath. Then he plunged into his tale. His sister listened, round-eyed, sharing his excitement. "I heard the *Sitt* say to the other *feringhi,*" Musa went on, " 'How I long to tell them stories, the kind of stories we tell to our children.' And the other *Sitt* said, 'There are so many things they would love to learn about, of which they do not hear.' Do you think, Fatmeh, these things are taught in the Christian schools?"

Fatmeh nodded. "Nebiyah has told me. She with whom I play. With a ball as large as—as your head and my head together—they play!" Fatmeh's eyes showed the amazement she felt.

Musa laughed. "Pooh!" he said scornfully. "I know all about that. That play is called football. You play it with your foot like this," and he kicked the round basket that had held the doves' grain far across the courtyard.

Fatmeh rescued the basket and stood with it in her

hand, looking down at her brother. "It's a shame!" she said at last. "I want to go to school! Why can't I?"

For a second Musa looked at his sister in amazement. Then he put his head down and laughed and laughed until he ached with laughter. "A girl, wanting to be wise!" he gasped. "Everybody knows that girls are the silliest—"

"See how wise Musa is," broke in Ebn Hassan's quiet voice. "Is it kind or clever to make your sister cry?" He lifted Fatmeh into his arms and, sitting down on the step beside Musa, hugged her close. Musa hid his shamed face. "Is that all the mosque teaches you? You have not learned the wisdom of the words you repeat. I hope you will learn better manners at the Christian school."

Musa gasped. "Am I to leave the mosque school?"

"Yes," said Ebn Hassan, "and as for Fatmeh, her

father will not prevent her from becoming wise or gaining knowledge."

Fatmeh clutched her father's arm. "Do you mean —I—may—go—to—school?"

"*Inshallah!*" said Ebn Hassan. "If God wills! So now both you and Musa will grow wise and good and clever. You will be able to give lessons to Mother and Father, won't you?"

Both Fatmeh and Musa chuckled at this. "But you are the wisest father anyone could have!" exclaimed Fatmeh.

"And the bravest and best!" added Musa.

IV

LESSONS AND SOMETHING ELSE

THE school playground was empty except for a kite and a crow busy over their own private quarrel. Their harsh cries broke the quiet stillness. Nothing moved across the sunlit space save the shadows cast by the big flapping wings in the birds' short flights. With beak and claw the kite and the crow struck at each other, fighting for the same treasured place. This was the top of a tall pole that ran up the side of the school building. From its top a bird, with its far-sighted eyes, could see right across the city and be safe from any danger that hid nearer the ground. The flat top of the wooden pole was a famous battleground for all the big birds that made their home near the school.

Presently other sounds floated through the open windows and wide doorway on to the playground. From one of the rooms came the sound of soft humming, telling of children at recitation, the clear voice of a teacher breaking through occasionally. From another room came children's voices raised in song. The birds forgot their differences and flew for shelter. They knew that soon the peace of the playground would be broken. From the safety of the wall that railed in the flat roof they watched for that which they knew would come.

First, the sound of marching feet and the chatter of happy voices; and then, out through the wide doorway there poured a stream of boys—big, little, and middle-sized. "Scr-ee-eech!" said the kite, and "Squarr-rrk" yelled the crow, and with a lazy flapping of their wings they soared high and away.

Musa left his classmates, the younger boys, who were eager and clamoring for a game. He walked by

himself to the end of the playground, and, sitting down on a seat, looked around. It was his first day at the Christian school, and he had not got over that new kind of feeling one little bit. His brow creased

in a frown as he began thinking over the things that had happened. First, instead of the matted floor and the blue-tiled walls and domed ceiling of his old mosque school, there were the cream-walled and straight-roofed classrooms. He liked his desk, though

he wished he had one all to himself. He did not like sitting next to Daoud,[1] who shared his seat and desk. He believed that boy was a Christian. And a Mohammedan boy was better than a Christian any day!

Musa scowled across the playground at the little Christian boy playing tag with the others. He would show him that a Mohammedan was better! He made up his mind to give him a push when the teacher wasn't looking.

That thought reminded Musa of a great grievance. His teacher was a woman! He, a Mohammedan boy, son of a Mecca pilgrim, to be taught by a woman! Surely his father couldn't have known. He should ask to be taken out of the school at once. Musa thought of the mosque teacher and of how he had always laughed at girls. "They are good to cook for us and to take care of our houses, but that is all," the old man had said. Now Musa loved Fatmeh and

[1] The Arabic rendering of "David."

would let no one hurt her for the world, but he did think boys were better than girls. So he felt very angry that Miss Simpson was his teacher. "Treating me like a baby," he muttered.

Then the schoolbell rang and put an end to the games and to Musa's thinking. The boys, breathless, began to file into school, but on Musa's face the scowl still lingered, and it was an unhappy boy who joined the line.

Lessons began again. First there was reading; Musa did not get on at that very well, for the teaching was so very different. He wanted to read as he had been taught in the mosque, just reciting the words he knew, without bothering about what they meant. That way wouldn't do for Miss Simpson. Musa was stopped and asked for the meaning of three words in one sentence. He thought it was horrid of her.

When the history lesson came, Musa's face bright-

ened with the joy of having a new, clean book for his writing exercises, and he began to copy the curly Arabic letters written on the board for all to see. He ended the first line of the first page, and then looked admiringly at it. It certainly did look very well! At that moment, quite by accident, Daoud jogged his elbow, and a drop of ink from Musa's pen flew on to the precious writing. In an instant Musa turned and drove his elbow with such force into Daoud that the boy went sprawling into the aisle. As he picked himself up, he stood looking at the angry Musa in a most surprised way. The other boys looked up from their work, and the teacher from her desk. "What is the matter?" she asked.

"Please, I fell, Miss Simpson," said Daoud.

The teacher looked from Daoud's puzzled face to Musa's angry one. "Perhaps, Daoud, you had better sit at that other desk. There doesn't seem to be enough room for both of you here." Then she looked

at Musa's writing. "You write very well, Musa," she said. "Come to my desk for some blotting paper. I think that blot will hardly show if you are careful."

For the rest of the afternoon Musa had the desk to himself; but he did not feel any happier. He felt uncomfortable about that push he had given Daoud. What would Miss Simpson do if she found out what had happened?

It was a very solemn boy who stood before the teacher after school. To his surprise Miss Simpson did not ask what had happened, she seemed to know! And she talked as though she knew what he had been thinking.

"You will be learning many interesting things in this school," she began cheerfully. "I expect you will love them all. It is nice to know things, isn't it? But one of the best things we all learn together is how to be friends—you and Daoud, and I, and everybody

else. You had your very first lesson in friendship today, Musa. But you didn't try very hard, you see. So you didn't learn! What did you do in playtime?"

"Nothing," Musa replied in a surprised tone. "Nothing at all."

"And did you have a lovely time?" asked Miss Simpson.

Musa stole a look at her. She was laughing. His frown broke up, and he laughed back. "It was horrid," he admitted.

"Many things are new to you," Miss Simpson said, "and they seem difficult for you at first. Not only the lessons, but all the other things. You have never had a lady to teach you before, have you?"

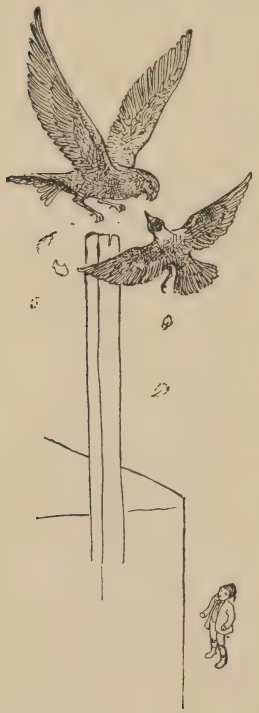
"No," replied Musa.

"Nor had to sit next anybody you didn't want to?"

"No," said Musa.

"Didn't Daoud behave nicely to you?"

Musa thought this over. "He didn't tell that I pushed him," he said.



Miss Simpson rose to leave. "Well, good-by," she said. "You will think about learning to be friendly, won't you?"

"Yes," Musa replied. He turned to go, then he came back to where Miss Simpson stood. He touched his forehead, his lips, and his heart quickly in a salaam. Then he said shyly, "I am glad you are teaching me. And may I sit next to Daoud, please?"

As Musa went through the playground on his way home, fierce bird cries made him look up. There was the kite beating its wings against the crow, who

was triumphantly sitting on the pole. "Squarr-rrk!" cried the one, and "scr-ee-eech!" said the other. Musa laughed. "Just like me," he thought. "Wasn't I silly!"

V

SICKNESS AND HEALING

THE bazaars were full of noise and dust. For some days the *khamasin,* a hot, fierce wind blowing straight from the desert, had raged. Dust was everywhere! It covered one's hair and got into one's eyes. It blew on to one's dinner and spoiled the sweet sticky syrup Musa loved so much. The sky was hidden with the yellow dust cloud, and the air grew hotter and hotter.

Musa walked home through the bazaar feeling most ill-used. Everything had gone wrong today! Before school he had dropped his mother's best tray and dented it. He had told his father that he had not done it. He had teased the kitten and made Fatmeh

cry. At school he had dropped the ink all over his desk and declared he hadn't. Musa blushed as he re-

membered his teacher's grave, surprised look. He felt pretty mean.

The *khamasin* was blowing harder than ever, and

he had to walk home through it! Why couldn't he go home in a school bus? Fatmeh was taken back and forth in one to her school every day. He, a boy, had to walk! Everything was hateful!

Some of his schoolmates ran past, laughing and whistling in spite of the sand and the wind. Two little girls were playing with their dolls in the shelter of an awning, their cheerful chatter rising high above the wind's roar. A blind boy sat huddled up against a mosque doorway, counting his few coins and crooning an Arabic song. An old porter trotted by, coughing and wheezing in the dust. In spite of the weight of the gaily decorated couch he carried on his back, he greeted the shopkeepers as he passed. No one seemed quite as unhappy as Musa!

Musa was glad to reach home and fling down his books. He lay down on the divan in the sitting-room, and closed his eyes. His head was aching and his eyes smarted with the rough wind. He was drowsy despite

the pain. Suddenly he felt cool hands on his head, and he roused himself at his mother's touch. Her large dark eyes looked into his with concern.

"Light of my eyes," she exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

Musa clutched her. "I don't know," he gasped. "My head aches and the room is going round and round."

After that he did not know very clearly what happened. He was put to bed, and he fell into an uneasy sleep. He awakened to find the doctor, a grave-faced man in a red fez, bending over him. By this time Musa was very ill, and his fever ran high. It seemed as though every bit of him ached. His father's troubled face seemed far away. Nothing seemed near him but the terrible pain.

Then queer things began to happen. The doctor and his father talked together, and his mother wept. The next thing he remembered was being wrapped up

and carried to a carriage. Then his pain made him forget everything. He saw nothing that happened about him, but after a time he passed into a wonderful, deep sleep, and pain and everything faded away.

A long while afterwards Musa awoke. What had happened? He was in a strange bed. Through the mosquito netting that hung over his cot he saw other boys like himself, tucked up in white cots. Musa tried to turn and could not. "Where am I?" he asked, and was surprised to find he had only a little squeak of a voice.

"Lie still, Musa!" Someone bent over him and gave him a cool drink. Musa looked up into the face of a white-capped nurse. "Tell me, *Sitt,* where am I?" he begged.

"You have been very ill—so ill that your father brought you to this hospital. But you are going to get well now. Your bad pain has gone, hasn't it?"

Musa nodded. "It was very bad," he said. "I'm glad it's gone. Where are Fatmeh and my mother?"

"Is Fatmeh your sister?" asked the nurse. "She will be coming to see you soon. Try to sleep now."

Musa closed his eyes obediently and slept for a long time. He awoke to the merry clatter of plates, and saw a brown-eyed boy in a blue-striped *galabeah*[1] standing by his bedside. The little fellow's head was bandaged and his face was very pale, but he gave a friendly grin as Musa looked at him.

"My name is Hassan," he announced. "That's my bed across the room. May I come and play with you?"

"I don't feel as if I could play," Musa replied weakly. "But do tell me where I am!"

"Oh, don't you know?" asked Hassan. "You're in a hospital, a Christian hospital. Lots of people are here. We are all getting better."

[1] A cotton coat-like garment.

"Why did you come?" asked Musa. "You do look funny with that bandage thing on your head."

Hassan laughed. "Oh, I fell off the top of our house," he said cheerfully. "My father thought I was dead when he picked me up."

"The nurses must know a great deal," said Musa. "They've made you all alive again."

"That's nothing to what they can do," Hassan boasted proudly. "Crowds of us Egyptian people come here for healing. The courtyard is full every morning. The doctors are very clever."

At this moment the foreign nurse came with something good to drink. "Musa must have his dinner," she said, "and you too, Hassan. No more talking for a little while."

The next day the two boys were looking at picture books together when Fatmeh and Musa's mother came. Fatmeh gave her brother a great hug, for she loved him dearly.

"I'm sorry I teased the kitten and made you cry," Musa said.

"I suspect it was your pain coming on," Fatmeh said wisely. "It wasn't you really, Musa, because you always liked Puss."

Musa laughed, and Hassan came to see what the joke was.

"He's my new friend," explained Musa. "Tell Fatmeh about that picture." He turned over the pages of the book to the picture he wanted. "Go on, tell," he commanded Hassan.

The little boy sat cross-legged on the mat while he told the story and Fatmeh listened eagerly. Mother had found the nurse and was talking busily with her. Hassan told of a wonderful Prophet who lived many years ago in the land of Palestine, and of how he was very good and great. "This is the story of the picture," said Hassan. "There was once a little boy who was so very, very ill that no one could make him bet-

ter. One day his father heard that the great Prophet was in a town some miles away. He hurried to find him. When he had found the Prophet, he said, 'Sir,

come down ere my child die.' Kind Lord Jesus looked at him and smiled. 'Go thy way,' he said, 'thy son liveth.' And when that father got home the little boy was quite well!"

Three heads bent over the picture as it lay spread on Musa's bed. "Oh, Musa," cried Fatmeh, "it's like your story. It's all about you. No one could make you better, that's why Father brought you here."

"They made me better in my sleep," said Musa wonderingly.

"Why do the Christians heal people?" asked Fatmeh.

"Nurse says it's because their Prophet is kind that this hospital was built," explained Hassan. "The Lord Jesus said, 'Go and do thou likewise!' So they knew he wanted them to heal and to show kindness. That's why they build hospitals."

"So they can make boys and girls well?" asked Fatmeh.

"Yes, like me," said Hassan, nodding his head.

"And me," added Musa.

VI

HOLIDAYS

IT was wonderful to wake up in the early morning and find yourself in a train instead of in bed at home! And when you had never seen green hills before, or a carpet of wild flowers, it was rather exciting. No wonder that Musa and Fatmeh could hardly move from the windows of the train.

All night long it had traveled with them toward Palestine, first over the long sandy desert of Egypt, and then past broad fields where the early crops were ripening. Then came hills, first the low green slopes, where oranges and lemons ripened, and then steep stony sides up which the train moved slowly. At every station came fresh surprises, and many strange new noises. Although the language was the same in

Palestine as in Egypt, it sounded different. But Musa was quite able to bargain for some oranges; for his one-piastre piece he bought two beautiful, large Jaffa oranges. They tasted very good on this hot day.

"Look," exclaimed Mother, as they neared the journey's end, "there lies the sea!"

"Isn't it all different!" said Fatmeh. "In Egypt there are no green hills for the goats to feed upon. Just look, Musa, at that little black kid with the long ears. I'd love to play with it."

When they left the train, there was yet another journey to go! The station and the town lay at the foot of the long steep hill of Mount Carmel.

A winding white road led to the very top, and little carriages drawn by mules were waiting to carry them, luggage and all. Up, up, and up, the mules climbed the long hill stretching far above. Below they saw the blue sea crashing in white foam on a sandy beach.

"Look, look!" Fatmeh screamed, "there's a boat!"

She had never seen a large boat before, and Mother had to hold her tightly, for she nearly fell out of the carriage trying to see everything at once.

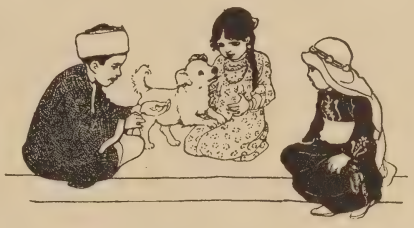
At length they reached the low, flat-topped building where kind friends were awaiting them, and both Fatmeh and Musa found themselves welcomed and hugged by their aunt and big cousins. The smallest cousin peeped at them from behind the door.

"Now," Musa whispered to Fatmeh, when he had rubbed off a rather sticky kiss, "now that's over, I feel as though the holiday is really beginning," and he turned head over heels on the tiled floor to show how glad he was.

A lovely time began indeed. Yusef,[1] the smallest boy cousin, soon made friends with Musa and Fatmeh, and took them into the garden to see his little yellow puppy. Lion-child, as Yusef called him, had not long left his doggy mother, and he was very glad

[1] *Yusef* is the Arabic rendering of "Joseph."

to make friends with two new admiring people. He pushed his little yellow head into the crook of Musa's arm and begged Fatmeh to rub his shaggy ears. When Mother came to call the children in, for bed-time came early the first night, all four of the children, Yusef, Musa, Fatmeh and Lion-child were playing hide-and-seek. Weren't they making a noise, and didn't they all need washing!



The next day everybody went for a picnic—aunts, cousins, visitors, Lion-child, and all. A donkey boy went first, leading the donkey that was carrying the dinner. After the donkey, walked the grown-ups, keeping to the path. The children ran, sometimes in front and sometimes round about, and Lion-child ran with everybody in turn.

Fatmeh ran on in front with the donkey driver. Suddenly the path turned a corner, and Fatmeh saw far below the blue sea sparkling in the sunshine. "Oh!" she exclaimed, clasping her brown hands together.

The donkey boy smiled and pointed far away to the north. Fatmeh followed his guiding hand and saw—as it seemed to her—hanging in the blue sky, something glistening and white. "What is it?" she asked, and the boy answered, "That is the hill of Hermon covered with snow."

Musa, too, looked at the lovely, far-off hill. "Snow!" he exclaimed. "What is snow? We never have it in Egypt." And Yusef found it very hard to describe snow to a boy who had never in all his life seen it fall.

The picnic was splendid, everybody said. They sat in the shade of wild olive trees on a carpet of wild flowers to eat their meal. How good the sweet bread, oranges, honey, goat's milk cheese, raisins, and almonds tasted!

Musa gave a long sigh when he could eat no more. "I call it a splendid picnic," he said, "there are such nice things to eat."

"The kindness of the aunts is very great, and the air is so sweet to smell," said Mother, smiling.

"And the sea, and, oh, everything is lovely!" added Fatmeh, looking at the flowers she had gathered.

"I like a picnic with the cousins from Egypt," Yusef said.

"Bow-wow!" yapped Lion-child, as he chased a big bumblebee, "bow-wow! So do I!"

Musa rode the donkey on the way back. He was not yet strong enough from his illness to walk all the way. Suddenly, as they turned a corner, the donkey took it into his head to run. Musa hung on, though his red cap flew off and his coat streamed behind. He was greatly enjoying the gallop when just as suddenly the donkey stopped, nearly throwing Musa over his head. Musa slipped from the little beast's back to see what was the matter. Sitting right in the path was a boy. The boy lifted a red, freckled face, and grinned at Musa.

"Sorry!" he said in a queer sort of Arabic. "My donkey threw me and trotted off. I've hurt my ankle. I'll be all right in a minute."

Musa considered him. The boy was a *feringhi,* surely, and how queerly he spoke! Musa liked his face, though. "Does your ankle hurt much?" he asked.

In another moment the donkey boy and the others came upon them. "Dear, dear!" said the aunt. "What has happened? Where are you staying, light of thy mother's eyes?"

The boy laughed all over his face. "I'm an American. We live in this country. We came to the mountains for the holidays."

"So did we," said Musa. "We live in Egypt."

"Gee!" said the boy. Then in Arabic he said, "My name is Bob Stewart, what's yours?"

"My name is Musa. This is Fatmeh. That one, he is my cousin Yusef. Lion-child belongs to him. You can have my donkey because your foot hurts. You do talk funny Arabic!"

"That is Syrian Arabic," said the aunt. "Now we must take him home."

"I say," said Bob Stewart as he limped into the hotel with Musa helping him. "I say, can't we all play together? My foot will soon be well."

Lion-child was smelling the stranger carefully all over. Now he wagged his tail. "Bow-wow!" he barked. "Yes, let's!"

And you will not be very much surprised to hear that they all did play together.

VII

WHAT THE MAIL BROUGHT

FATMEH'S doves rose in a whirl of soft feathers away from their scattered corn as the little girl came running down the path to meet Musa. She waved a white packet above her head, crying, "It's for you, all for you!"

Musa flung down his books on the stones, "Why, it's a letter," he exclaimed; "it can't be mine!"

"See," said Fatmeh, "it's all on the cover. Father says it's for you," and Musa read above the name of the town and the street, in the Arabic lettering, the magic words: "Musa. In care of Ebn Hassan Effendi."[1]

[1] *Effendi* is a title equivalent to "Mr."

"Yes," said Musa, drawing a long breath, "it is for me. Oh, Fatmeh, who can it be from!"

"*Malaish! Malaish! Iftah!*"[2] cried impatient Fatmeh. "Open it, do!"

Musa, with trembling hands, opened his letter and began to read it aloud, slowly, to Fatmeh.

JERUSALEM, PALESTINE,
September 25.

DEAR MUSA,—

How are you? Isn't it hot? I'm scorched all over. Dad says you can't put a pin between the freckles. But that's only his fun.

We are ever so busy. Dad is translating another English book into Arabic, and Mother is helping. She is making pictures for the book. The last one Dad did is ever so nice. He has given me a copy to send to you. I hope you will like it. Mother says I may send Fatmeh one of her pictures. It is my very own, so it is my present. They will both be coming by the next mail.

Dear Musa and Fatmeh, I do wish you were here. Didn't we have jolly times on Mount Carmel? This is a long letter, so no more from

Your American friend,
BOB STEWART.

[2] "Never mind! No matter! Go on!"

Musa's face went quite pale from pleasure, and Fatmeh's eyes grew large and round. Then they both flew indoors to tell Mother.

How long that next mail seemed in coming! "Have patience, O my treasure!" said Mother to Musa when for the twentieth time he ran to the court-yard door to see if he could make out the postman's red fez in the distance. "Sooner or later he will come," she added when he and Fatmeh had almost given up hope of seeing him again that day.

"I don't like waiting," sighed Fatmeh, seating herself beside Musa on the steps.

"I hope the postman won't get knocked over by a motor or anything," said Musa anxiously. "Why, there he is!" The door opened, and with clattering feet on the stones, the postman hurried in, carrying a flat brown-paper parcel in one hand and a paper-covered roll in the other. The presents had come!

Out from the flat parcel came Musa's book, and

from the roll, the picture for Fatmeh. All the household crowded around to see—Father, Mother, maids, and the man who fetched the water every day in the

goat-skin bags. And the postman also stayed to see and to say, "Ah! By the Prophet! Is it not wonderful!"

Fatmeh's face glowed over her picture. "Mother, I know the story, my teacher told it to me in school.

Do you see the baby? Isn't it a strange cradle he is lying in? But the ox and the ass will not hurt him at all!"

"He is the light of his mother's eyes," said Mother, smiling at the picture Fatmeh held; "that, anyone can see. But why do those men kneel before the baby? Is he a king?"

"The baby is Jesus. The shepherds are worshiping him," said Fatmeh softly. "I'll tell you all the story."

Ebn Hassan looked over Musa's shoulder. The boy sat on a little cane stool so busy turning over the pages of his book that he heard nothing. Then, at his father's touch, he looked up. He flashed a smile at his father.

"It's a story book about a boy," he said. "His name was Yusef, like our cousin. He lived in Palestine ever so long ago, and he had such lots of adventures. Do you know, he came to Egypt, to our coun-

try. Bob told me some of the story, and Miss Simpson has read about him in school. She said you would know about him, too."

Ebn Hassan nodded. "Yes, our books tell us about Yusef, but not the stories you have heard."

"Let's read it together, Father," said Musa. "Then you can help me with the hard words. Isn't Effendi Stewart clever to put it all into Arabic for you and me!"

Fatmeh left her picture to come and admire Musa's book with its pretty colored border and cover showing a big picture of Joseph minding his father's sheep. Musa read a little bit to her until bedtime

came and books and pictures were put away for another day.

Fatmeh's sleepy voice said, as she cuddled down into her bed, "I wish I could send Bob a present. But I'm only a little girl. I've nothing a foreign boy would like."

"Oh, Fatmeh, of course we shall send Bob something, just to say thank you. I wonder what!" Then Musa too was in the land of dreams.

In the morning the two children asked their father what he thought they could send to Bob. Then Mother was asked the same question; and then they asked it of each other. Nobody could answer. But that evening when Fatmeh was feeding her doves and talking to them, as they alighted on her outstretched arms, Musa gave a sudden shout and threw up his red fez. "I've thought of something," he cried.

"Something for Bob?" asked Fatmeh. "What?"

Musa sat down on the corn basket and twinkled at

his sister. "You ought to know," he said. "You have just given me the idea."

"Me?" questioned the bewildered Fatmeh. "Me? Why, I said nothing. Why, what did I do?"

"Well," demanded Musa, "what are you doing?"

"Feeding my doves," answered Fatmeh. "Why should that make you think of Bob?"

"I was thinking about how much you love your doves, and then all of a sudden I remembered Bob and the fuss he used to make over Lion-child. And then I wondered if Cousin Yusef could—"

"Could get a dog for Bob?" Fatmeh burst in.

Musa nodded. His sister scattered the rest of the corn, then turned to go in. "We will ask Father now," she said with decision. "Perhaps he will write to Aunt for us."

And Father did, and one day the postman brought a postcard from Cousin Yusef to the children. This is what it said:

DEAR COUSINS,—

Salaams. Lion-child's little brother went to Jerusalem this morning. He cried very much, but I hope he is happier now. He is a nice little dog. Salaams.

From

YUSEF.

Four days later a red fez appeared again at the courtyard door. "Peace be to all!" said the postman, and handed Musa another letter. It was from Bob. It didn't begin or end properly, but Musa and Fatmeh thought it was the loveliest kind of letter. It read:

Thank you both ever so much. Isn't he lovely! I think he is even nicer than Lion-child. Dad has bought a brass collar for him, and I'm going to have his name put on. Guess what I'm going to call him? *Friend,* because my three friends, Yusef, Musa, and Fatmeh, gave him to me. I'm teaching him to beg. Thanks ever so much. Good-bye.

Oh, I've got some news. We are going to live in Egypt because Dad is going to do different work. Hip, hip, hooray! We shall see each other again soon.

VIII

SERVING ONE ANOTHER

IT was Saturday afternoon and therefore a holiday from school. Bob Stewart had come from his home at the other end of the town, and had met Musa where the electric cars pass the bazaar streets. They had planned to go together to the shops, for Bob's mother was having a birthday soon and Bob wanted Musa's help in buying her a gift. He was afraid that his Arabic was not quite good enough to shop with. The two boys had walked through the busy bazaar streets for some time, searching for just the right thing, and at last they had come to the shop of Abdullah, the bead-seller. As they looked at the hanging colorful chains of beads, Bob suddenly saw something he liked.

"See, Musa!" he exclaimed, "I think Mother would like that!"

Musa looked where Bob's eyes rested.

"That scarab, do you mean?" he asked.

"If that's what you call it. What is a scarab, anyway?" demanded Bob.

"A scarab is our name for a beetle," Musa replied. "That one you are looking at is not a real one; it is made from a kind of clay. There are heaps of real little live ones running about in the sands by the pyramids." Then, turning to the shopkeeper, Musa said, "Show my friend that little thing of no account."

The bead-seller smiled and put the greenish-blue scarab into Bob's sun-burnt hand. "The young Effendi knows a good thing when he sees it. That is a good scarab, oh, thousands of years old."

"It is very pretty," Bob said admiringly. "How much do you want for it?"

Musa hastily cut in, "I will bargain, I will bargain, say no word." Then, while Bob looked on, enjoying the fun, Musa and Abdullah argued over the price.

At last the bargain was made, the money was handed over, and Musa came away triumphant. "I gave Abdullah twenty piastres less than he asked at first," he said.

"But you gave him ten piastres more at the end than you offered at first," said Bob.

"It was good bargaining," said Musa, very much pleased.

"But why don't you have a price and stick to it?" inquired Bob, greatly puzzled. He explained how American and British people shop. "The price is marked on the article and you buy it or you don't buy it. No one bargains."

"How very dull!" Musa said. "Our way is great fun."

"Thanks ever so much, anyhow," Bob said. "I

know Mother will like the scarab. She loves just that color.'

"Now we are going home to tea," said Musa. "There are honey cakes. I smelt them baking this morning." And he led the way homeward at a quick trot.

Suddenly they stopped. Two children, a boy and a girl, stood in their way. "For the love of kindness, O brothers, show mercy!" said one. They were very ragged and fearfully dirty. The girl held her brother by the arm. There was a bandage across the boy's eyes, and by the way he held his head, Musa knew that he was blind. Bob looked pityingly at them both as the girl again said, "Oh, be merciful, show kindness! My brother, see, he is blind!"

Musa felt in his belt and shook his head, but Bob, searching his pockets, found a half-piastre piece which he dropped in the girl's outstretched hand, a hand so thin it was like a claw. Musa went whistling along, still pleased at his bargaining, happy to be with his friend, looking forward to the honey cakes for tea. But Bob looked a bit unhappy.

"It must be awful to be blind," he said.

Musa stopped whistling. "Horrid! May the evil be far from thee and me!" He spread out his fingers in front of his face as though to protect his eyes.

"Yes, I know," said Bob. "But we ought to do something for that blind boy."

"Did we not give him money?" asked Musa. "At least you did, and I would have done so only I'd spent my last piastre on those sweets we've eaten. What more could we do?"

"Well, my father would want to help, I'm sure.

If people haven't what we have, he says we ought to share."

"How can you give eyes?" Musa demanded. "You cannot make the blind see."

Bob rubbed his head thoughtfully. "Don't know!" he said. "But all the same, I feel mean when blind and lame people pass by."

Musa flung open the courtyard door. "Here's Fatmeh," he said, "and I guess tea is ready. Come on."

The honey cakes were good. Bob was very fond of the sweet Syrian cakes. He ate quite as many as Musa, and it was a merry tea-party. Fatmeh was bubbling over with a secret she had to tell, but good manners made her wait until the boys had finished the cakes and tea.

Bob showed his scarab, and the children's mother admired it. "The *Sitt* will like it," she told Bob. "Only today did she say that she wished for one."

"Today?" said Bob.

"Mother," cried Fatmeh, "you've told—"

"Ah, la!" laughed Mother, "the secret, the secret! Tell now the story, light of my eyes."

"Mother and I went to see your mother, Bob," Fatmeh said. "I had my new frock on, and the silver chain Father gave me."

"You looked nice, I guess," smiled Bob.

"And your mother has asked us all to picnic with her! At the pyramids! Next Saturday! Because it's her birthday. We are going on donkeys!" Fatmeh cried out the news like so many pistol shots. "And we went with her to see her babies. It was the day they all came to see her," she added.

"Her what?" said Bob. "Oh, you mean the Babies Welfare Center. Yes, it's the day for the clinic."

"What's a center?" asked Musa.

"It's a place where the mothers from the villages

where there is no doctor bring their babies."

"Ah, the dear things," said Musa's mother. "Such poor babies, some of them. Mrs. Stewart tells the mothers what to do. There was one very nice clean baby there."

Fatmeh's voice shook, "Blind, quite blind. I held him. Fancy, that baby is never going to see!"

Musa spread out his fingers. "May the evil eye look not on us," he said.

"It wasn't the evil eye that gave the baby blindness," said Fatmeh. "Mrs. Stewart says it was dirt and flies."

"Certainly the babies, many of them, were dirty," sighed Mother. Mrs. Stewart showed the mothers what to do. And told them how to feed the babies."

"I held the soap," said Fatmeh. "Most of them loved their baths."

"Perhaps," Bob said later to Musa, "if someone had told our blind boy's mother about the flies and dirt, he would never have been blind."

"No!" said Musa. "So you can save sight if you can't give it!"

The week went by and the next Saturday brought the picnic. It was a glorious day. The donkeys behaved splendidly, even the one that carried big wicker baskets—like bird cages—in which the lunch was packed, and Friend, Lion-child's little brother, barked and frisked with gladness.

The children ran about and, helped by Friend, searched for the sand beetles that so quickly scuttled out of sight. They ate their lunch in the shade cast

by the big pyramid and climbed up some of the stones of a baby pyramid that stood all by itself.

After a time they were glad to fling themselves down on the sand beside the two mothers for a rest. "Tell us a story, Mum," coaxed Bob, cuddling Friend in his arms.

So Mrs. Stewart, with her arm around Fatmeh and her eyes on the river away in the distance, told of a Great One called Jesus, of his loving kindness, of his skill and wonder. She told of one wonderful Saturday evening long ago when, after a busy day, the people of the town where he was, brought all their sick and ailing folk into the doorways of their houses. "He will pass by this way," they said. "And if he only sees them, he will heal each one."

So when Jesus came down the street, little tired voices stopped their crying, hot faces and fevered heads grew cool. Pains and aches went, strength and gladness came to each one. For "He had great com-

passion," and suffered when others suffered, and longed to bring joy.

"I shall tell Father that story," said Fatmeh.

"And I must tell my father about our blind boy, Musa," said Bob. "I'm sure he would help him."

"I wish that Great One—Jesus—lived today," said Musa.

"He lives—always," said Mrs. Stewart. "And you know he wants us to have compassion and to do kindnesses in his way."

"Even little girls like me?" Fatmeh asked.

"Everyone, every one of us."

"I'd like to be like him," Musa said.

"So would I," said Bob.

"Me too," said Fatmeh.

And they are learning to be like Jesus, to have compassion, and to do kindness, away in that far-off land, Bob, and Musa, and Fatmeh.

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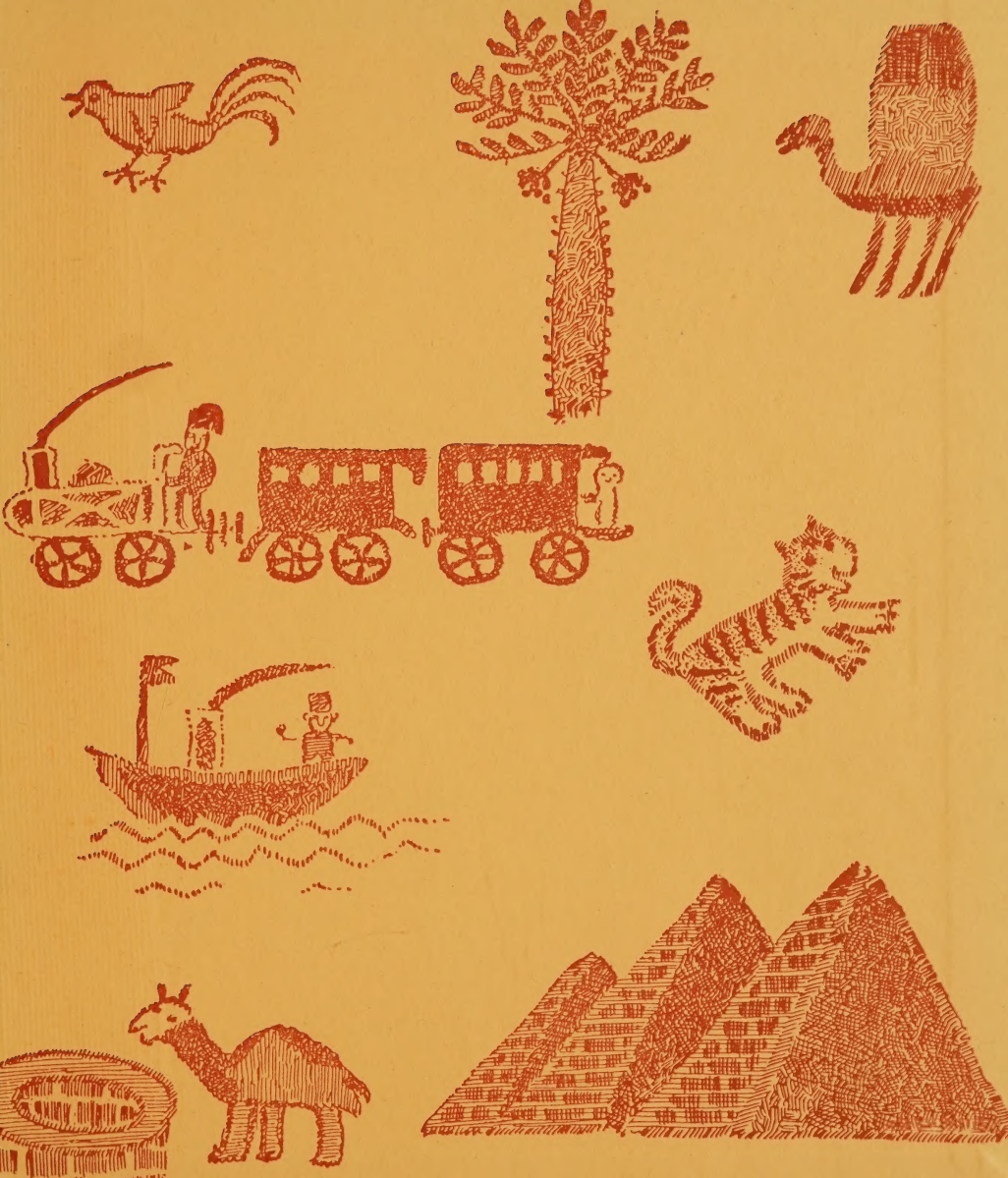
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